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NETHERLANDS ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL EAST-WEST TRADE

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The 9 January 1953 issue of the Nieuwe Haagsche Courant reported that an official of the Economische Controle Dienst (Economic Control Service) and a Hague exporter were arrested recently in connection with the export to the USSR of 78 large rolling-train rollers. The export license had been falsified by the official by the insertion of a zero, so that the shipment appeared to consist of 780 rollers of a much smaller size. The case came to light when another official, who had seen the original document for 78 rollers, spotted the discrepancy. W., the exporter, and v.d. H., the official, were arrested and held at the city jail, but it was already too late to stop the shipment. The rollers had been loaded aboard a Soviet freighter and by now have probably been installed in some Soviet steel mill.(1)

The 13 January issue of the same paper commented on this incident as follows:

"It was not possible to determine whether or not this is the first time this has happened. In any case, this matter has blackened the reputation of our country abroad. As a member of NATO, we are pledged to prevent the export of strategic materials to countries behind the Iron Curtain, and here it is clearly demonstrated that it is possible to export 78 heavy rollers, weighing 10-15 tons each, to the USSR by the simple process of falsifying a document to make it appear that there were 780. And this was done without our customs officials being aware of the difference in size and number."(2)

On 11 November 1952, according to the 12 November 1952 issue of the same paper, a 38-year-old citizen of the Hague received a 3-year sentence for preparing false documents to make possible the export of strategic materials to the Iron Curtain countries. One such document was recognized as false in Switzerland, where it was noticed that the English word "which" had been misspelled "wich." The defendant claimed not to have been aware that all such

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documents must go through official channels. He further claimed that he had not profited from his activity, since none of the transactions had been completed. The court refused to accept this story, and, in passing sentence, regretted the damage done to the good name of the Netherlands abroad by these activities.(3)

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1. Nieuwe Haagsche Courant, 9 Jan 53
2. Ibid., 13 Jan 53
3. Ibid., 12 Nov 52

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